

Chair Cole and other members of the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee:

My name is Harry Levins. I live in Grand Ledge. I am testifying in support of the five-foot-passing legislation because I have been riding a bicycle since I was old enough to do so and have witnessed lots of bad passing behavior on the road.

It should be a no-brainer to safely pass a bicyclist. The bicycle weighs perhaps 14 to 18 pounds and is moving at 12 to 20 mph. A car or pick-up truck weighs two to four tons and, in rural areas, is moving at 55 mph or faster. There is no balance of power in this situation. Staying far away from a bicycle when passing is common sense. Most drivers do that. But not all. That is why this legislation is needed.

On Washington Square, I believe the posted speed limit is 25 mph. Given that the street is narrow, cars are backing out of parking spaces, and the area is crowded with pedestrians, most people would drive at 25 mph or slower because of common sense. But not all! That's why there is a posted speed limit.

Let me give you two concrete example of bad motorist behavior when it comes to passing a bicyclist.

Imagine there is an oncoming car in the opposite lane. Behind you, a car is approaching. The driver behind you does not want to slow down to pass. Instead of waiting, he decides to "thread the needle"—pass between you and the oncoming car. I have seen this many times. It should be illegal to pass that closely.

Another dangerous situation is a motorist who believes that he cannot cross a double-yellow line, regardless of the situation. I have seen drivers stay to the right of a double yellow line while passing me, even though there is no oncoming traffic. That puts the car very close to the bicycle.

In both of these cases, a five-foot-passing law would dictate behavior that most would define as common sense.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. I would be happy to answer any questions about a bicyclist's experience on the road – my only area of expertise here.

Harry Levins
941 Kingsbridge Rd.
Grand Ledge, MI 48837
(517) 627-9763
harry@harrydale.com